

Legacy
1999

p o e t r y

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A Failed Poem

A pen full of promise
meets papered potential
and Rhymes full of reason
between them are born

But promise spills over
and blackens potential
And in sudden treason
the paper is torn

- Ann Mosher

weight problem

the	class	is	busy	discussing
the	descartian	concept	of	souls
and	how	much	they	weigh
if	at	all	and	whether
they're	part	of	the	body
or	separate	floating	in	some
innerouter	subtle	space	and	i'm
suddenly	very	aware	that	i'm
lost	that	my	soul	is
missing	severed	from	my	body
stuck	six	months	ago,	standing
stuck	by	the	contrast	between
dark	summer	eyes	and	blinding
white	winter	sun	realizing,	that
this	isn't	light	at	all
there's	a	certain	heaviness	when
i'm	with	you	matter	has
more	substance	seconds	become	grainy
flickering	film	reels	clicking	as
i	move	you	move	heavily

- Jennifer Pester

it shocks me, sometimes
the utter timelessness of a rainy night
walking
10 p.m. could be midnight could be three
all sounds muffled, all lights softly bleeding
into the encroaching darkness
all shadows twisted, humpbacked
by giant umbrella-shapes

here a burst of laughter echoes
there a car slides around corner
but still remains the almost mythical
solemnity of silent, dark rain
after which the world will stir, awake,
and greenly carry on as usual

- Jennifer Pester

I always am
tired behind my eyes
somehow the weight,
the heavy harshness of you
pulling, stretching
dragging me down
is almost too much to carry
and i am tired,
so tired of trying.

how is it that between us
there is this balance
where the moments
when everything works
bleed into these other moments,
the slicing bleak moments
which, when added together
balance out
to the same nothingness there was before?

- Jennifer Pester

equilibrium

p a u s e

rebecca

becky wishes she were twenty
like me
instead of "just fourteen"

and i can't help but wonder if
when she's twenty
she'll miss being fourteen
like i do

- Jennifer Pester

Deck of Cards

The cards in my hand shuffle,
the sound fluttering the silence of the room.
Life is a game, a challenge,
one that I must master to win.

Gain the points, find the ace,
beat the opponent,
And never, never lose your
poker face.

The Game gets easier as I play,
and my hands fly over the smooth surfaces.
Every move is planned,
every tactic thought out.

I have become a master--
the game is me, I am the Game.
But as I look at my silent opponents,
I realize, I have become Solitaire.

- Alysa Shepherd

There are times when I feel but the
 That unstrapping us will surely Best
 Destroy me For you
 I have used my
 Emotional Scars I am half crazy
 As ropes With my empty hand
 To bind us together As I watch you fly off
 And now you want to walk away I smell your wax burning off
 Now why As you clear the sun
 When I am the prettiest prison But you ask for your own
 To hold you close Scrapes
 To my sacred heart And Broken Bones
 Do you wish to be What can I do but use my own words
 So cold And wear my own face
 Outside of me While you walk in the hills
 Is my mind so bad I begged you away from
 That you wish your own How will I answer
 And when have I ever When asked my name
 Wanted Anything The same lines

- Rachel Arruda

I am here

I am here, to comfort, to hold;
 I am here to see you through
 I am here, to love and listen;
 I am here, but where are you?

- Alysa Shepherd

Observation #247

IS IT PAINFUL, YES?
PAINFUL TO KNOW
TO LOOK INSIDE
TO SEE
AND TO LOVE.

IT IS PAINFUL
BUT SO PERFECTLY
BEAUTIFULLY
HUMAN.

IT IS IN OUR OWN PAIN
THAT WE ARE MOST HUMAN.
WHEN THE DUNGEON WALLS
ARE CRACKED DOWN
AND HE OR SHE-
THE REAL HE OR SHE-
COMES STREAMING OUT
ON BILE AND TEARS.

THE PASSIONS OF LUST ARE SO
FLIPPANT
AN ALTERNATE REALITY OF
HEARTBEATS
FLESH AND EMOTIONS
SENSATIONS AND INSTINCT
PULSING US FORWARD
MORE ANIMAL BECAUSE
WE ENJOY IT.

AND LAUGHTER
SO GAUDY
LIKE BRIGHT PAINTINGS
TO COVER UP THE HOLES
IN THE WALL
MASKS TO COVER UP OUR BLIGHT
REASONS WITHOUT QUESTIONS
BUT PAIN,
BEAUTIFUL PAIN
SHOWS EVERY GRAY HAIR

EVERY CREASE AND WRINKLE
EVERY MILE WALKED
EVERY HEARTBEAT CLOSER
TO THE ULTIMATE END
SKIN SEEMS MORE REAL
WITH EVERY CUT
THE BODY MORE TANGIBLE
WITH EVERY SHARP PANG
WE FEEL SO MUCH MORE HUMAN
WITH EVERY CRY.

JUST BEYOND THE PAIN LIES
LOVE
LOVE BORN OF PAIN
LOVE STRENGTHENED THROUGH
ADVERSITY
A MUSCLE MADE VIGOROUS
FROM REPEATED CHALLENGES

LOVE BORN OF PAIN RISES
LIKE THE FIRST SUNRISE OVER
THE FLOODED EARTH
HOW MUCH MORE POWERFUL
DID THE SUN SEEM
SHINING ON ALL THE OBSTINATE
WATER
HOW MUCH MORE BEAUTIFUL
THE RAINBOW
ARCHING OVER DESOLATION
HOW MUCH MORE HUMAN
THE PEOPLE BOWED IN PRAYER
IN THE MIDST OF AWFUL
DESTRUCTION.

- Rachel Arruda

Colors

I passed you again, in that same-always place
As fire-orange leaves fell about your face.

I wished today you might stop and talk
But I heard only the crinkling of our autumn-fresh walk.

You did not know, in the peace of that air
The struggle in me as I tried not to stare.

You felt nothing sacred in the moment we passed,
My hopeful face, those burning colors, for you will never last.

I ignored you again, in that same-always style
wanting to speak, yet unable to smile.

So you kept on moving, kept on living your day
And I kept on walking away.

- Laura Rumsey

invisible worlds circle around me
demons and angels fight for this soul
reality cradles me
yet screams
in unison
blinded for my protection
is all i am told

scowling, clawing, panting, and chanting
devils lunge fast
but fall in dismay
standing around me
a fortress, unyielding
encircled by heavens arms
by faith i can see

i fall to my knees
and enter doorways to heaven
i speak with my father
he misses his child

yet, through all the chaos
i find myself missing
the sound of his voice-
soothing and mild

reality

- Joey Norwood

silent soldiers

row by row
file by file
i passed down the ranks of
the soldiers
straight ahead they looked
never moving a muscle
faces hard as marble
unyielding as stone

each had done his duty
they now were going home
stiffly at attention
each with a flag
a color guard of silent
soldiers

i blinked for only a moment
they were dead on their feet
a cemetery of men
faithful to the end
but the end came too soon

now their caskets
row by row
file by file
i pass down the ranks of the
soldiers.
their eyes forever closed
their faces forever still
hard as marble
unyielding as stone

my silent soldiers

- Becky Gerrans

Mary's Cleansing

Falling to my knees I cry
Tears falling on your robe
Even though my screaming thoughts
To You my conscience folds.

Looking in my pleading eyes
You see the urgency
Hold my heart in your hand
Make my spirit free.

Father, heal me.
Please don't turn away
Like the world's done.
My life is only full of shame.
Can I find myself in your
forgiving eyes?

You raise me to my feet
And as I look into Your eyes
A little girl looks back at me.
Innocence resides.

An image I'd forgotten
Stored beneath the sin
He spoke, "when you fall remember,
You are born again."

Father, heal me.
Please don't turn away
Like the world's done.
My life is only full of shame.
Can I find myself in your
forgiving eyes?

The person who has never sinned
can cast the hateful stones
Bending down he wrote their sins
Shamed heads turned to go

"Has anyone condemned you?
Where did they all go?
I don't condemn you either.
Go and sin no more!"

Father, heal me
Please don't turn away
like the world's done
My life is only full of shame.
Can I find myself in your forgiving
eyes?

- Joey Norwood

young heart early wasted

Oh young heart early wasted,
So full of pride and fire.
A hungry life barely tasted
is now empty of desire.
Stand tall rock of remembrance,
Proudly bare the name,
Of one who lived without defense--
and sleeps without shame.
Oh hear the voices calling,
they know you've paid the cost.
But why are no tears falling?
They know not what they've lost!
The world will never know
all you could have meant to her--
The strength that you would show,
The hearts that you would stir.
And you will never see
The way they will love you.
Only in death can you be
what in life was already true.
Oh fresh breath early taken,
such a fire has burned away,
And with too much beauty to be mistaken
about what you'll mean someday!

- Laura Rumsey

Memories...Sometimes you can't let go, and sometimes you can't remember no matter

how hard you try.

Memories...Sometimes they keep you from sleeping, and sometimes they keep you from waking up to reality.

Memories...They make you shudder, they make you smile, and they make you learn...

Memories...Are who you are, and they make you realize who you want to be.

Memories...There will always be more...

- Becky Jarnas

Memories

The First Time I Saw You

No, I didn't know
the first time I saw you.
And you may have been handsome
but you were not beautiful yet--
or amazing or wonderful or "the
one."

Not yet.

You were just you
and I was just me--
Me, in all of my strange
awkwardness
and bumbling unsurity
about anything, about everything,
about you.

And no, I didn't know
the second time I saw you,
or the third, or the fourth--
but somewhere in the sweet time
that has so quietly elapsed
You did become beautiful,
and amazing, and wonderful.
So now you are the one I see, hear,
breath, live, need, want--
Now my life expects you
to be in the future somewhere.
I knew how much I wanted to love
you

when I saw you would not
love me.
Maybe that knowledge fueled my
fire
Creating an unconscious need.
Discovering the depth, the
possibility
has left me restless for you--
Feeling your power
I am scared of my heart.
How do I tell it no?
Did you see the light
that followed you

whenever you came near me?
Strong and silent
these feeling continue to grow,
and somewhere from deep inside
I still hear your echoing laughter--
At me?

No, your beauty allows for
so little lasting pain,
pain you never meant to cause.
The last time I saw you
was so much like the first--
Too much like the first
Except that this time I knew,
I wanted, I needed, I loved you.
That much I knew.

The rest is a blur of tears
and smiles and scents and sights
and songs,
and none of it is as beautiful as
you.

None of means anything without
you.

Yes, the last time I saw you
I loved you.

Me, in all my strange
awkwardness and bumbling
unsurity,

But knowing how deep that love
should have been able to go.

Maybe it will grow in my still,
For now that I have known you
What could ever die?

- Laura Rumsey

ripe for the harvest

I.

I still live here.

You'd think that after ten years
of fighting emptiness

I would've had enough.

But for some reason, I have not.

I want to move away.

I can't.

I'm too scared.

No, it's more than that.

I like it here.

Right in the
country of never ending plains,
barring just one ridge.

A ridge to the west, that, I hate.

I am alone right here.

An island
in these plains.

Not just physically.

I cut all ties.

Long ago, I found
them very tiresome,
so now I'm alone.

But were they ever real, or dreamt?

I just can't remember.

I can't.

remember.

It has been too long.

I just don't know.

It's not long enough.

I have been living each
moment in its time,
while hoping for some other time.

II.

Lately,

I've noticed

that something is different.

Something is wrong.

It's been coming for some time now.

I've been feeling it
deep inside my bones.

Slowly it moves
and slowly it conquers.

Slowly it rolls,
and slowly it makes itself known.

From day to day,
no difference is shown.

From year to year
only I can know.

So very slow,
almost imperceptibly so.

No one has a clue.

I'm sure. I've asked.

They just don't know.

Having been here
but a few years.

They couldn't have noticed.

Not like me,

I've been here long enough.

I've noticed the change.
Lately, anyway.

III.

The difference is in the air.
Can you taste the air?

I can.

I am.

It tastes funny.

Not like it should.

Can it taste the dark?

Can it?

It does.

Each day, darker than the last.

Tasting both sweet and foul.

Not believable.

When compared with what it was.

With what I think was.

I think it was once sweet.

The taste of harmony.

The taste of purity.

With frequent breezes of silence.

Breezes so clean and cool.

A breeze of simplicity and perfection.

A breeze affixed in my mind.

That is the difference in the air . . .

I think.

IV.

Now it comes on.

Over the ridge.

And on from the west.

I wanted to leave.

To run far away.

But I couldn't.

No, I didn't.

It appeared as a tornado.

A twister of mammoth proportions.

Taller than the sky.

Wider than the horizon.

And I desired it.

To tempt my fate?

To have some fun?

To hold the storm in the

palm of my hand.

And it came on.

But I was ready.

I could face it alone.

Then it was here.

V.

Flowing, blowing, rolling.

A heavy fog that blocks out the sun.

Always advancing, but never ending.

An unstoppable force.

Flowing through the holes in my faith.

Blowing across my barren mind.

Rolling over my life.

An unrelenting oppression.

With no purpose other than sorrow.

And I am helpless against it.

- Evan Inman

Darkness surrounds me.

The panting hooves on a gravel road
are replaced by my own.

I'm alone out here

but there's a peace that surrounds me.

The brooks are filled with cold fountains,
working their way along the dirt path.

And my eyes keep looking upward
as though there's a part of me up there.

Nothing seems to be disturbed
as though the night was made for rest.

My heart is heavy with questions,
sometimes wanting to know all the answers.
In part we only seem to see the beginning
because the ends seem far too deep.

Someone should put a stop to that
or we might all walk in the dark.

- Ted Whitsett

n i g h t

w a l k s

Tipping

Tipping, stumbling, falling,

Helpless, hopeless, stupid.

These feelings that force their way

Upon that which is important.

Strong, fit, toned.

What comes from the trip?

A new understanding,

A lesson learned.

It helps to keep from tipping,

Again.

- Randle Brown

Psaltery

What a little known instrument
There was only a small hint
I had never seen one
Oh what was to be done?

It was played superbly
And she affected me terribly
A curious device it was
The Psaltery, important because,

Love was in the air . . .

- Randle Brown

Stargazer

Lying on the grass,
the earth scent
wafts about me.
My eyes,
pressed wide and
dilated against the dark,
sweep across the fields of space.
Earth's scent fades,
the ground falls away,
and I melt into the sky,
reach out a tentative hand,
and touch the fingertips of God.

- Carrie Zoch

Stand
on a rock
in the middle of a field
as the wind blows hard
against your skin
and your hair becomes
rizen whips lashing

- Ann Mosher

You saw our world from high above,
Too high to experience our human love.
You felt our world from outside the air,
And longed for pleasures you could not share.

You heard music in the sunrise,
You couldn't see why a human cries.
Your touch could put a soul at peace,
Life's beauty for you would never cease.

To feel the wind or taste a pear,
To smell a flower or touch her hair,
What you saw was of our earth.
What you left held so much worth!

To heal a heart or create a smile,
To fly away from pain once and awhile,
You were face to face with ultimate love,
You let go of God and the joy above.

A fallen angel, so much is lost,
At the time did it seem worth the cost?
The God who gave you free will to choose
Now weeps with you over all you must lose.

Did you think you'd miss the undoubted trust?
Do you think you'll cry when you return to dust?
How could you leave what we all strive for?
How could you think that here you'd find more?

God will still love you and miss you so bad,
But you can no longer feel that closeness you had.
Doesn't our selfishness make you mad?
Didn't you love Him enough to be sad?

Now you can breath our smoggy air,
Now you can be seen anywhere.
Now you hear silence in the sunrise,
And now you wipe tears from your eyes.

The beauty and friendships that we know
Are the closest we can get to heaven's glow.
You may think it was worth the cost,
But you're a fallen angel, and too much is lost!

- Laura Rumsey

a fallen angel

have you ever seen a bubble bounce?
As its slick iridescent layers shake
it is too fragile to last forever,
as soon as it hits the rough spot it breaks.
I used to live in a bubble with
fantasies and dreams of my own,
yes- once upon a time I lived a fairytale life
I never thought I would end up alone.
I was the princess and you were the prince,
we danced through each day
never letting our feet touch the ground
but searching the world for a better way.
the princess cried for her unhealed wounds
until she understood her fear
that she was so afraid of loving
the one she held so dear.
Sorry is just a word
even if you mean it as much as I do,
i'm not sure you even believed it
but I never meant to hurt you.
I never thought
I would be the very last to know
I would be the very last to finally let it show.
when it rains I know God is crying
because the most beautiful thing
he ever created
is dying.
i'm so unselfish in my suffering
but I still can't understand
why no one has time to cherish what God has given
everyone's forgotten how to take a stand.
did you know that
it's my heart
that pounds beneath my flesh,
its my mouth
that pushes out this breath.
I never thought I would be
the one to hold you down

though i've already fallen
and broken my crown.
so please close those amber eyes
while I wipe away the tears.
but don't deny your rages,
don't ignore your fears.
I thought we could make it
but you wouldn't give up your search
you wander endlessly through the walls of confusion
trying everything for what it's worth.
your looking for an answer
spelled out in big bright letters
but if you don't choose your path
you may end up stranded forever.
but fate has let you to it
so keep on doing what you do
but don't forget I tried so hard in my own way
to love you.
your so beautiful
but I won't deny you
the title you carry of torture
but you do what you have to do.
My sweet surrender
will forever be
engraved in your heart
as long as I still hold the key.
you can try to forget
the sights, the smells, the sounds,
but the place that we started from
is a long way down.
why did it take a princess
so long?
to figure out that we are born innocent
not strong.
the way I see it,
there is no difference,
whether you charge forward
or stumble
into ecstasy.

- Christy Speakman

stumble into ecstasy

wal

1 of

trees

encas

e me,

g i a n t

sentinels--

my back. on my own again,

and talking to t h e m ,

i kick a stone into silent green

here I can act out an

elaborate drama

or recite my

own twisted

p r o s e

or perhaps

s h a r e a

philosophy that

n o o n e

understands

they do not laugh or

point their limbs

instead, in

b r a c k e n o u s ,

gentle thunder

- - t h e y a p p l a u d

acclaim of the forest

acclaim of the forest

- Jesse Lee Rademacher

Never Land

She is a bird
With tiny wings
And a tiny song.
Over the clouds,
She flew away
From human wrong.

Soaring above the hurt,
Trusting the wind,
She flies...
Moonlit wings
And a broken heart,
She cries...

The ocean hears,
The rivers know,
The mountains see...
That she is a bird,
With tiny wings,
But she is free.

Over the clouds,
She flew away
From human hand...
She is a bird,
And she is flying,
And she will never land...

She is a bird,
And she is flying,
And she will never land...

- Becky Jarnes

What do you do when a candle burns out
that has lit your whole world for so long?
What do you do when the music stops
and you can no longer hear that song?
How do you stand while you watch a life fall,
How do you carry on?
What can you do to make it through
When someone you love is gone?

Where do you look to see some joy
when that face will no longer smile?
What do you do when that voice will not speak
and that beauty and grace have gone out of style?
What do you do with all those memories
that haven't come to mind in a while?
How can you cry without wondering why
you've been put through this trial?

There's a heavenly garden waiting
where every iris will bloom.
One beautiful day the sun will shine down
and defy the chains of the tomb.
But for now there is sleep--
a peaceful rest in mother earth's womb.
And those eyes and that smile shall surely be seen
when life once again will resume.

But how does a world recover the loss
of a heart that can no longer care?
Tears and time can heal the hurt
but that burnt candle will always be there.
So how do you learn to sing a new song
when someone you love is gone?

- Laura Rumsey

when the music stops

ANOTHER DAY

Another day
ticking away
another child is born,
love is made
angry words are sprayed
and someone in black will mourn.
Another time
to stand in line
and watch the humans race,
knowledge is taught
colds are caught,
all is unpredictable in this place.
Another night
to prepare for the light,
another chance to pray
Smile and cry
fail and try,
we've been given another day.

- Laura Rumsey

I was thinking of you.
Like a daisy growing under a tall oak tree
You picked for me-
on a warm summers day.

I was thinking of you
Like a kiss that brushed my lips
While moonlight peered over the hillside-
streaming across a desolate lake.

I'm sorry if you lost your freedom.
I couldn't give you that-
Feeling.
Like skiing across a sea of glass

A reality that hits me and hangs by a tiny string
You could easily snip and throw away.

I'm sorry if I took your freedom,
And I gave you mine.

You're right
there are many stages of love
taking away freedom is not love.
Were we blind?

I was thinking of you.
Holding me so tight. You,
My new family and friend-
The one who makes me feel safe.

A full moon disappears so fast.
Like shooting stars we never saw.

A reality hits me and still hangs by a tiny string
I can't think of you anymore.

- Joey Norwood

~~I iron~~

you open the door,
you stand so still,
i would run to you
but for this iron will.

you scan the room,
your eyes miss my face,
but i am transfixed
by your careless grace.

strongly you live,
weakly i breath,
this determination crumbles
under the spell you weave.

i fear i am destined
to be alone,
for i cannot smile at you
through this face of stone.

your laugh today
is better somehow,
i have loved your smile
but never like now.

i have wanted you always
and can feel inside,
this granite rock,

this stubborn soul i try so hard to hide.

you close the door,
i stand so still,
i could still run to you
but for this iron will.

- Laura Rumsey

sentinel

Straight, supple arrow
Some passing wind
Carried to this spot
Took root and grew
In this lonely place
Afloat in a sea of grass.

Surrounded by open solitude,
The arrow points to the sky.
A green sentinel
Home for the winds
and nest for the stars.

A thousand melodies
From its boughts are plucked
Sweet music
Stringed accompaniment
For feathered songs.

Cold
Bitter, shattering cold
Ice cracks the arrow
Snaps the shaft
Hurls the head to the ground.

Spring's warmth
The sun smiles down in the fallen sentinel.
A feeble gasp
A tiny arrow
Pokes up from the earth
Raises its head
Stretches
Laughs in the sun
A wee green sentinel.

- Becky Gerrans

Blessings

Most days, I forget. I get caught up
with the chore of waking, the question
of how to *do* the day, and things slip

away

before I can remember -

the purrrr

of a sailboat, the way the word

Esurientes

rolls off my tongue, the low groan of
a trombone. I did not always love
these things. Before, it was requiems
and the op. 8 #12, and the sad
weight of a cello.

Vincent's lonely iris.

But there is more now. There is
the scent of clover as I am lying in it,
the way I have learned the shape
of a face, the morning's sweet
light.

I cannot always name my blessings,
but somewhere there is a list that
always grows.

Most day, I can sing.

- Jennifer Barizo

waiting, i am
and tired, too
wring-spun numb
sometimes i know
there is no tomorrow
seconds have no meaning
slide into minutes, hours
days flow by, still as
waiting, i am
and tired, too
wring-spun numb
sometimes i know
there is no tomorrow
seconds have no meaning
slide into minutes, hours
days flow by,
still as waiting

days flow by still as waiting

- Jennifer Pester

Ice

You touch, I freeze, you look away
We sit silent, growing cold.
Your words are chilled a little more each day,
I don't offer a hand to hold.
Heavy snow, white as your face
suffocates my heart.
Do you care? We're in the wrong place,
we have fallen apart.
Crystallized, this love has become
biting, freezing, raw--
Too cold for pain, my heart is numb

Let go so I can thaw.

- Laura Rumsey

Apple blossoms drift down on my head.
He smiles at me--
"A beautiful shower for a beautiful girl."
He kisses me goodbye.
Soon his profile is obscured by
Apple blossoms.

Two springs.
I write him--
Apple blossoms in my letter.
"Do you remember?"

A telegram.
"Missing in action."
A letter returned.
"Missing in action."
Inside, my apple blossoms
Died, dead, brittle
Still fragrant.
Hope.
Winter, Spring.
Another telegram.
"The body (his body)
will be sent to you."

An old apple tree by the grave
Has burst into bloom
Flaunting, mocking,
A shower of apple blossoms
on the flag.
On his face they lie
Like fragrant tears--
Apple blossoms.

- Becky Gerrans

Apple Blossoms

Civil Rights

I see you, little black boy
from forty years, a gender barrier, and a race away
I see you fall

their fire horses pummel your quivering body
the water pressure
one hundred pounds per square inch
is turning your mocha skin bloody red

and still, the color is too much
too much for you to eat in their restaurants
too much for you to ride in their busses,
walk on their sidewalks, drink from their fountains

now, after everything has changed,
still too much color
for most white folks to let their baby girls
be your baby too

your body tumbles over the rough pavement
thrown around by the relentless needles of water
as if mere water could wash away your humanity
disguise their cruelty, bleach the truth

yet you don't seem to feel the pain
more than water, hatred
grinding you against the curb

they watch, laugh, loosen their ties
mock their little marionette

even then, could you hear
over your mother's prayers, your sister's screams,
the water's thunder
even then, could you hear the crescendo
the muffled sound of freedom's coming ring?

thank you, puppet boy
your grimace has become our song

poetry winner (tie)
- Jennifer Pester

One is warm
One is cold
Both move alike
Leaning forward
searching the face
Two of the same person
Reflection of an empty soul.

The windows of the soul
Are smudged and stained
Exchanging looks,
Synchronized movement,
Glance for glance,
Tear for tear.

Although one moves only
As the other,
It mirrors perfectly
The empty wasteland
Inside the black portholes
Of the face it sees.

Desolation leaps out
A spark in the wind
Fueled by the returned
Gaze of the likeness.

But one turns away
And the other,
Left alone,
Empty,
Smiles
in
sudden
joy.

- Becky Gerrans

St. The red C lass

Fragments

I remember a time when the glass was clear
and in one piece
For a moment the great light shone
and in that moment I was complete
refracting rainbows into a dark universe

I was needed

Then the mirror cracked
hundreds of bitter shards splintered
slicing numb skin too preoccupied
with the horror of the loss to care

I am broken

Only a fragment now
of what I used to be
ever wondering how the great fingers
lost their grip
how I managed to slip through

Unnoticed

Acid rain has dug into my soul
with it's sharp fingernails
warping my surface
dirt and sorrow have distorted my vision
but cruelly leaving me memories
of a time when the glass was clear

And this memory is why I'm here
alone
picking up the pieces.

- Ariel Childers

permit twilight
half earth, half fairyland
let it drop, shatter
stain the sky

let the cereal-bowl moon
tip slowly
watch the Cheerio stars
splash from its rim

see the clouds of spilled milk
spread across the table-sky
let it be suddenly,
accidentally night

- Jennifer Pester

A Sweet Girl

Her head, a bag of highly refined sugar
Her lips, a rip, always opening up
Sweet white sands, continually pouring
Flavoring everything way too much

Her candied chatter quickly puts me
Into diabetic shock
I crave sour pickles, bitter olives,
mustard, pepper and lye soap

- Ann Mosher

Some where Outside

Somewhere outside.
Someone is being raped.
A child is being beaten.
A country is starving.
Gunshots echo,
in civilized streets,
marking out young men
who will never know
more than concrete towers,
steel bars,
and fear.
An 11-year-old
prostitute,
tears long since frozen
behind her eyes,
swallows a pill-her only hope
to numb away
her life.

And here I sit.

My biggest problem--my waistline,
By biology quiz--six out of ten,
My roommate who won't clean
her half of the room.

Boy, I have it pretty bad.

- Jennifer L. Williams

mama

i'm sorry i don't visit very often,
don't write,
(don't call).

it's just that i fall apart
when i think about what happened to you.

to this day i struggle,
wondering if i could have made it different
wondering if things would have worked out
better
if i could have somehow been older,
wiser,
stranger...

but i was so young

and so selfish

too scared of losing my mama
to be able to reach out and save you.

- Jennifer Pester

I could try

I could try to explain how you
confuse my mind
and mystify my thoughts.
I could say in words
what I think I feel
but no one still would know.
To describe your beauty,
your powerful ways,
or to tell how much you are
Would be to trap a whisper
in the wind, would be to cage the sea.
You glow, you burn
into my heart
my words could
forever engrave what you are--
with this pencil I hold
that is not you, but
I sit here, looking at you,
thinking, wanting,
that's all.

- Laura Rumsey

True Love true love

I ripped the bodice rippers when I learned they told me lies
True Love is never heaving chests and smoldering sultry eyes

You cannot charm with champagne or with one seductive glance
The guy you meet and marry rarely has the name of "Lance."

Duke Westmoreland of Claymore cannot sweep you off your feet
He'd more likely strain his back and recover in six weeks

Instead we must find simpler men with names like John and Sam
Who'll never be Clarke Gable but will Frankly, give a damn

They won't own twenty horses or a mansion down in Spain
But they will share an umbrella when you're walking in the rain

- Ann Mosher

Up in Heaven

Up in heaven
We Adventists will
Set a good Example
by not wearing our crowns

Lest someone forget
Commandment Eleven
“Thou Shalt Not
Wear Jewelry”

- Ann Mosher

On the Organ in the Collegedale Church

I think, perhaps, a heathen from ancient days
On seeing the mighty Instrument
and Hearing it's Glorious Notes
Might sacrifice his first born Child
Upon it's bench
and reverently fill the platform
with dead cattle

- Ann Mosher

Mrs. Patterson

Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels,
and have the gift of prophecy,
and understand pretty much everything,
and have moved Everest into my backyard,
and given everything I have to feed the poor
and even offered my body to be burned
I shall never be as good as Mrs. Rhonda Patterson.
My skirts, I'm afraid, are shorter than she deems appropriate.

- Ann Mosher

I Need to be on my Knees

~~I couldn't make it there fast enough~~
~~nearly tripped on anxiety~~

~~or pain~~

~~felt it like a surge of energy~~
~~down a weather vein~~

~~I need to be on my knees~~

~~bond between this one has weakened~~
~~distant relationship unraveled~~

~~like a section of old twine~~

~~Am I so abrasive that~~

~~I tore you to shreds?~~

~~I need to be on my knees~~

- Jesse Lee Rademacher

What does it mean, to be Jewish?

What does it mean to be a Jew?
At one time it meant,
ugly yellow star patches,
stark grey buildings crammed in,
stuffed too full of people too empty,
barbed wire,
and the sweet smell of gas.

Now, a bitter memory, it mingles with
matzah balls
and challah bread,
my potbellied papa with scruffy beard and tobacco,
twinkling candles of Hanukkah,
Passover's bitter herbs,
a people of culture, pride, traditions fully empty.

What did it mean, once,
to be one of Abraham's seed--
as numerous as the sand on the seashore,
or the stars in the sky,
a chosen, a special people?
To tread a dry path,
through mountains of water,
to be fed from Heaven,
and watered by God in the desert,
on crooked places made straight,
worshiping at Solomon's temple,
reading the scroll in the synagogue--
the scroll of Isaiah--and waiting for
the Messiah.

A people of hope,
A people of fulfillment.

- Jennifer L. Williams

My mind aches with a fever tonight
My life has been laid out on the dissection table
Staked out with pins for examination
A forensic analysis of my composition

It seems I am the subject of much discourse
You discuss me like a textbook
Philosophying about my existence
While I sit mulling of the reality of myself

I feel I am a monster
But could the Lord create a monster
Or have I evolved to some lesser form

I am ashamed of me

- Jesse Lee Rademacher

Your words are more real then you,
they live and do things you never do.

Vivid, colorful, full of promise
you never dream of keeping.

I've tasted them,
even swallowed them whole.
Living off of your words
-wondering-
if you live off them too.

- Rhonda S. Rossier

Ashamed

Solitary

Solitary Jewel
Unaware of it's beauty
Sitting in a case
Untouched, Untouchable
So it is
with the girl
too shy to speak

- Ann Mosher

The Kiss

Miles grow, and it's as fresh as yesterday's peach,
picked somewhere in Mexico. I do think they
grow them there. Either there or Canada. The Niagara
valley. Somewhere far. But in my mouth it's
the crowning moment of my summer, the taste of
many touches, night after night. I have erased them
all in favor of that afternoon with you, with only
myself to trust.

Miles grow, and you have nothing of mine. From
all your journeys, here and there - your teeth
in my arm, your tongue in my ear, you bring
nothing with you. But that kiss you never had,
isn't that what reminds you? Wasn't it just
yesterday? That grey day. From the window
a sky smoke-grey and buildings shale-grey
and clouds dust-grey and full of rain. *Kiss me*, you said,
your lips, here (you pointed to your own) *on mine*.

Does it matter that once we
were young? I don't know
where my heart has gone. With that
kiss I never have you? Age has
greyed me, strand by strand,
skin like sand - but *once*, we were happy.
That grey day - don't you see? We were
the momentary green - fresh as
every summer's harvest. Your skin, this peach,
beneath my tongue.

- Jennifer Barizo

Traction
Caught in your grip
I am to you like a moon to the sun

How long can I defy your gravity
Before I spin into you?

You are a centrifuge
a deluge

a magnet to my heart

Could it be some force of nature
that is forcing us apart?

Could I ever tame you?
Or would you pull me into your intensity?
And could you handle me
With my revolving ways
and rotating core

You seem the center of something
And I could fly the galaxy long
and still never find another you

We are very different
And yet we are two sides of the same magic
You and I

You are a circle of beauty
And I want to be the center of it

- Jesse Lee Rademacher

Science Nerd In Love

What is love
What are the feelings it produces
Nothing but a mass of chemicals
And increase of neurotransmitters
to course across synapses
to synthesize serotonin
pumping blood--speeding the pulse
And energizing of the glial cells
increasing nerve energy
heightening the senses
These feelings of a harmony of cells
all ringing at the same frequency
and the delight of homoeostatic mechanisms
inducing balance
Not to sound like a nerd

--but oh baby, you and me could produce synergy

- Jesse Lee Rademacher

I remember you
Though I met you tomorrow

You stood out in that crowded
Empty room

And we talked for hours
with our wordless stares

And I am hoping
To meet you again

Are you free yesterday?

- Ann Mosher

Confessions of a 6 year old

Mud:

I love it in all fifty flavors,
served up fresh and slimy,
smooth and slick,
or grainy for texture,
with jelly globs of frog eggs--
even better!

No cheese souffle,
or cherry tart,
or yellow custard pie,
on china plates,
with lacy cloth,
in airy dining hall,
can ever compare,
to rainy days,
and lunch in March,
of mudpies.

- Jennifer L. Williams

Out of the Blue

I once met a girl from out of the blue,
From the very start I loved her. I knew!

I thought to myself, "This is love at first sight.
No need to look further, she's no doubt Miss Right!"

So one day I gathered all the wits I could find.
And picked her a rose that was one-of-a-kind.

I crossed all my fingers and knocked on her door.
When it swung open my jaw hit the floor.

I held out the flower and told her my name.
Shared with her my feelings and hoped she felt the same.

Her smile kind of faded, and the twinkle left her eyes.
Bad breath, or was it what I said? I couldn't quite surmise.

She told me not to leave, and said she'd be right back.
When she returned she held within her hand a paper sack.

The sack was filled with letters all addressed to me.
And on the front it read in ink, "I couldn't make you see!"
She told me she was sorry that it had to be this way.
She turned around and left me there with no more words to say.

Why did I See the beauty a little bit too late?
She'd loved me for the longest time, but this was now my fate.

I once met a girl from out of the blue.
From the very start she loved me. I never knew!

- David Colbourn

JESUS IN A BOTTLE

“Taste and see that the Lord is good!”
Buy him in a six pack now
Or place an offering I the vending machine
Push the little red button and Wow!

Drink him up and drink him down
Feel the spiritual caffeine
You’ll buzz with Jesus for an hour or so
Get a rush from the Nazarene

Talk to you pastor, talk to you priest
They might be holding a sale
Discount coupons given out
Free samples in the mail

Some claim our Soda is a fake
That our sellers are not sainted,
That Jesus Christ was crucified
But never carbonated

Don’t listen to these fools who say
our true price is your soul
and our fizz is fornication
and our buzz can’t make you whole

They think that God is bigger
Then our corporate enterprise
That he’s watching and he’s waiting
And he’s planning our demise

But if this God’s so clever
and if he’s so very smart
Why does he Freely offer
To come live in all our hearts?

- Ann Mosher

late to vespers

behind them all
 it's a special sound--i call it the sabbath
 sound
 fancy shoes on sidewalks--tile, concrete or
 asphalt
 like so many reindeer on their way
 to a favorite feeding ground
 behind them all
 i feel like an eskimo in furs rounding them
 into the fold
 i stand in the back while they settle (to chew
 their cud?)
 two thousand heads--reflections of the high
 glass windows
 reds and golds, brown, black, bald, blonde
 shiny and sleek, coiled, curled, coifed, combed
 short on gray, easy on white--a different house
 they're all moving--can't sit still, nodding
 tipping, turning, leaning, flinging back
 reflections
 of the high glass windows of this fold

- Amberly Howe

The Crown Jewels

The Father is lavish with His jewels--
Sprinkling diamonds on a black velvet sky,
Emeralds carpet the hills with lush greenness,
Studded with sapphires, amethysts, and rubies in wild abandon.

Golden autumn gives way to silver winter
And topaz summer is preceded by an opalescent spring.
He touches each winged singer with a jeweled Midas' finger
And scents gems to tempt the sense of taste all year round.

But as if to remind us of the One of great price,
A single pearl floats in the embrace of the night.

- Becky Gerrans

the mob
 one mind
 one movement
 forward
 to attack
 the man
 one mind
 one movement
 trying
 to run back
 Mob and Man
 - Ann Mosher

She is motel monotony
 With white towels
 And free soap
 And elevator Muzak
 all the way up
 forgotten trinkets left
 by interesting guests
 usually stolen or
 quickly mailed back

Never a Picasso
 in her picture frames
 only flowers upon flowers
 maybe a Monet

Check in if you will
 but her prices are draining
 and she'll send you brochures
 long after you've left

- Ann Mosher

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**You see them everywhere-
It's the bum sleeping in the cardboard box.
It's the woman in red on the street corner.
It's the funny smelling old man in the old folks' home.
It's the single mom with three kids to feed.
It's your next-door neighbor who just got married
for the fourth time.**

**You see them everywhere, everyday-
And you pass judgement,
put them in neat little boxes,
and feel sorry for them.**

**But did it ever cross your mind that-
It's you in the mirror
with the perfect smile
and angelic eyes
That could maybe learn something from them?**

**Have pity on no one
but yourself.**

- Rhonda S. Rossier

Middle School Damnation

Jean Claud Clones
March Down the Lockered Halls
A Stranger enters their midst
Without Jeans
Without malice
but is crucified
and burnt alive
It's Middle School
Damnation

- Ann Mosher

Growing Wise

Alone with ivory, Beethoven and medicated muscle salve
I am left to spend ten-year old summers on my own.
Seventh grade and I learn to keep doors closed,
atune myself to 440, know toccatas by heart. Things
fall away, like junior high preoccupations
with boys, scented lotion and teen magazines--
all talking of love. I know these things, because
even with panes shut tight and the perfect pitch
of my father, crowding all, I can still hear
as far away as New York City, London maybe,
Toronto, for sure. Where did the years go,
doors shut, fingers on the keys? The world
wasn't ready for me yet and all I could face
was the amalgam of those notes, speaking
in ways I could only know. I wondered if
anyone else understood those same, still songs.
Perhaps only I heard them speaking - *stir me,*
soothe me, show me home.

- Jennifer Barizo

October

Because she performed to reinvent herself
she understood. She knew how in
The concert-hall dark there was
No longer him or her, or we, or anything
Imperfect or past. For him it was just
All the goodness left over from
Summer and the taste of joy - like
Melons on a hot afternoon, or salt
Water, sea water on the lips.
But that was months ago.
October she learned the weight of love.
In Boston, suddenly, knew that it was
Heavier than a wrist on a heart or
A cheekbone against a breast.
It was more. The truth of it,
The gist of it was not in the
Subterrestrial bars on Huntington St.
Or the neon sings with their
Fingers of light. He taught her.

Nights later she would see the dark
Red side of love, carving a name
In her chest, but October-
She was still wet in a season
Of fire. Still fastidious about
Her beauty. Still green.

poetry winner (tie)
- Jennifer Barizo

You wear your
pessimism
like a favorite
sweater
You've worn it so long
nothing else
seems to
suit you

But why must you
insist on
knitting me
one
I'd rather enjoy
the light
freedom
of my optimism

- Rhonda S. Rossier

feeling far fallen
when rattling unanswered
thoughts
amount (yes) to zero
and I wonder where are . . .
(if I make my bed in hell)
You where are You

ascending to heaven
that where You are
I may also be ?

why still then
feel I far fallen

(From Psalm 139:8 and John 14:3)

- Rachelle Newbold

the dawn . . .

and I am growing . . .

brighter as I learn

lighter as I come to know

knowing colors

vibrant golds that shout my joy

quiet pastels that whisper the promise

that I will ever be growing

that I will ever be learning

and I am growing . . .

I unfold

I open

I blossom

I thrust my arms out through the sky

and I am free

I turn my face to the sun

and I come alive

the sky gives me peace

the sun gives me purpose

and I am growing . . .

*“The path of the righteous is like the first glean of dawn, shining
ever brighter till the full light of day.” Proverbs 4:18*

- Rosa LeAnn Dyke

her blanket

She clung to her red blanket.
It covered her nakedness.
She walked the cold, dark streets,
The blanket tightly wrapped around her frail body.
It gave her something to call her own.
She saw many other people with their wraps,
some a similar shade of red.
She noticed some with lighter colors and other darker.
Occasionally she saw a bright, white almost shining
blanket
wrapped securely around a sturdy looking person.
She like her red blanket,
but there was something attractive about the white
ones.
She wondered how she could get one.
One day she saw a Man walking along the darkest
streets.
He carried a large bundle of those beautiful blankets.
She shyly walked over to Him.
She paused, almost turning around as she
remembered that she had no money.
She quietly asked Him what the price was.
He looked tenderly at her and said, "They are free."
As she walked away with her new blanket
she heard the Man call after her,
"Please tell the others."

- Debbie Battin

The Muse

I was the muse
The patron saint
and the girl on the pedestal

I was the dream
of poet and painter
their breath of inspiration

I was.... lonely

- Ann Mosher

A Lullaby

Baby
Sweet Baby Child
May God Tuck you in tonight
May the stars shoot down from Heaven
To Guard you and keep watch
May the angels sing you a lullaby
May Jesus Rock you to sleep
Baby
Sweet Baby Child
May your slumber be holy and sweet

- Ann Mosher

Like a dog
tail waggin'
yipping happy barks
as the station wagon of life
pulls into my driveway.

I do my wiggie
tongue lagging
saliva ecstatic happy dance
in anticipation
of what life
has in store for me.

The years
like people
get out and pass me by
without even a pat
for my shaggy
little head.

The door slams
and I'm left outside--
to find my own spot of sun
where I can stretch
and dream
in the warmth
of things yet to be.

And so
my hopeful heart
lies quiet
waiting
until
it's my turn
to go inside.

- Rhonda S. Rossier

prose

The Way Things Die

It's as though the entire world has just been created when it's springtime. The towering trees lift limbs rejuvenated by sun warmth and spread their fingertips out to brush the sky and touch the infant sun. New leaves and blossoms unfurl in sticky newness, and everywhere around you, from the sky to the ground, and the whole of nature, throb life and rebirth. It's the gentle transition from the dark, chilling winter to warmth and extraordinary color.

It ages, however. The sky, now August in appearance, suspends a glaring and merciless sun that beats moisture from the aged plants. Thirst is everywhere. The trees, arms lifted and waving with each how, grudging gust of wind, seem to plead for rain. Dust scratches over the parched ground. Nature holds its breath. There is stillness in the expectation for salvation.

And then there is transformation. In obedience to the season, it all begins to alter. The colors grow vibrant in a furious array of autumn tints. The sun now sinks to its westward bed in nameless shades. And walking through the woods, if you stop and cease all human noise, you'll hear the showers of leaves fluttering from their noble heights to the ground below, the wind gently nudging the creaking boughs, see the glorious vault of sky arch and extend to distant horizons. Halt all thought, and you will hear the eloquence of artless abandon in the way things die.

- Carrie Zoch

The Lady on the Corner

“Oh, come on light! Turn green. Please.” I don’t think I can stand to be at this corner for another second, not with her waiting over therein the rain. I wish I could do something to help, but more than that I want the light to turn green so I can drive away.

I hasn’t exactly been a stellar day so far, and spending my only free afternoon this week combing the labyrinthine downtown library for a book that apparently doesn’t exist hasn’t done much to improve my outlook on life. Having finally given up hope, I search for an exit and finally emerge from the library’s dark recesses, only to find the flat, gray sky pouring down rain.

Soaking wet from my sprint to the car, I pull out of my hard-won parking spot into the agonizing mess we affectionately refer to as rush hour. Still in a foul mood, I glance at my gas gauge and notice the needle sinking merrily down past the “You’re a moron for not getting gas” red area into the “Five minutes until you’re standing by the side of the road waiting for the next Ted Bundy to come to your rescue” black zone. I snap my attention back to the highway only to watch helplessly as the last exit for really cheap gas whizzes by. Great.

Poor college student that I am, I decide to get off at the next exit, turn around and go back. Coasting down the ramp to the light, I try to figure out the shortest way to get to the gas station. It’s then that I see her.

She’s huddles in a little ball on the curb. Dirty blonde hair drips down her face and over excruciatingly thin shoulders draped with one of those old, torn imitation leather jackets. She appears to be about thirty years old and desperately in need of a shower. It looks like she’s trying, with a marginal degree of success, to stay dry by covering herself with the jacket. It’s big enough the disguise the rest of her clothing, but I sincerely doubt it’s doing much to protect her from the insistent rain. Her head is resting on her knees, keeping her face hidden.

“Oh, no.” I’m so surprised to see her sitting there in the rain that I say it out loud, oblivious for the moment to the fact that I’m alone in the car. I had forgotten that there are almost always people like her at this corner, begging for a handout instead of getting a job. After a while, you learn to look the other way. I’ve never seen them out in the rain, though.

I hesitantly pull to a stop at the red light, just three feet away from where she sits in the mud. Longingly, I look back at the relative safety of the highway. *Why'd I have to pick this exit?*, I think. *Figures*. At the sound of my car, her head comes up just enough for her eyes to peek over her knees at my car, then drops back down.

For the life of me, I can't tell you what color her eyes were. I usually notice things like that, but not his time. The think that struck me was how empty she looked. I've never seen eyes so completely devoid of hope.

The cardboard sign in front of her says "Help me. PleAse. StRanded. Will woRk foR food." I try not to look. *When is the light going to change?* I want more than anything to be able to take her back to school with me. I have a nice room.

I'd get her warm and dry and fed. She could sleep on the couch in the lobby. Maybe I could even find her a job, but I'm scared to try. I've heard too many horror stories about kindhearted people who've done just that and been rewarded with a three-minute eulogy on the evening news. And what about the deans? Not to mention my roommate. They'd all be furious if I brought some lady off the street back to stay with me.

Should I give her money? No, that's a big taboo as well. I could swing by Taco Bell and pick up some tacos for her. I'd have to talk to her then, though. I don't know what I'd say. I'm afraid it won't be enough, afraid she'll ask for something more that I don't care to give her. I'm afraid she might be mean or icky like all the stories I've heard about homeless people. Maybe she's a criminal, a drug addict, or a psychotic refugee from Moccasin Bend. I feel so confused.

Not two minutes ago I was pouting because I'm too scatterbrained to remember to put gas in my car when I'm supposed to. Now here's a lady who doesn't even have food to eat, much less a car or money to put gas in it. I can't believe how selfish I am, how many blessings I have that I take for granted, even dare to complain about.

The light changes and I pull away. I can't just leave her sitting there in the rain. I don't know what else to do, though. So I drive. I find the closest gas station, fill up my car, and think about at least getting her some chips and something to drink, but I don't. I get back in my car and head back toward Southern. Soon I'm far

enough away that I realize I'm not really going to go back and help. I'm going to be just like everyone else must have been today. I'll think about her every now and then, but I'm not willing to risk a part of myself to try and make her life any better.

I'm trying to forget now, trying to rationalize why I didn't stop to help. I can't just let it go, though. I've been taught ever since Cradle Roll to do what Jesus would do, to do everything I can to make life better for the people who have it a little worse than I do. I've heard a million sermons based on those verses where Jesus asks us to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and provide shelter for the stranger, because if we do these things for the people He loves, it's the same as doing them for Him (Matthew 25:35-40). What He doesn't say in those verses is that we should feed the hungry only when they come to our church or provide shelter for strangers only if they come with a list of good references. I don't know if I've ever thought about that before.

I do know, though, that if it had been a cat or a dog I had seen huddled up in the rain with no food and no home to go to, I wouldn't have thought twice about helping it out. And yet I refused to do the same for another human being. In God's eyes she was my sister. In God's eyes, she was Jesus. And I left her sitting on the corner in the rain.

- Jennifer Pester

Christi

It was a quick death--one slippery road, one car, one telephone pole, all somehow adding up to zero--the small carnivorous emptiness that seems to be life without her. And yet, what I remember is not so much.

A parking lot, late at night, waiting for her. I'm curled up in the passenger's seat. She screeches to a stop, he rolls down his window, asks her "Did you just use your emergency brake to stop like that?"

She smiles, rolls her eyes. He says, "Wow, that was pretty cool!" and life flows on. Strange, these pebbles of memories the swirling eddies polish and leave at my feet.

I remember another time, after everything. Pine trees, granite . . . we're sitting in the memory-strewn grass, and he says, "We're probably sitting on her feet."

So we laugh, and we move a little further away.

It isn't an easy time, but not as difficult as I would have expected (as if something like this could ever be expected).

And now it's much later. We don't talk much anymore. We have new lives, new friends, new interests. And I wonder sometimes if he still goes there at night to think, and if it all still adds up to zero for him.

- Jennifer Pester

A Purple Dress and Broken Nevers

I remember that purple dress--that long, lavender-purple dress. I think Mother found it in our church's Dorcas room, or maybe I the community clothes box. It had an ugly, brown stain on one of the white satin sashes and a torn hem, but Mother hemmed the hem, scrubbed out the stain, and ironed the sash. I remember the day she called me into her room to try it on. In all of my six years I don't think I'd ever seen a prettier dress. Mother had it hanging up on the track of her closet door. It hung beside a dress for my sister, but it was yellow and had a wide, lacy yellow flounce over the shoulders instead of sleeves. Mother took down the purple dress and held it up to me. She smiled.

"It's so long it'll make you look like young lady," I remember her saying.

When the dress was on and Mother had tied the ribbon into a bow around my waist, I turned to face myself in the mirror. The skirt fell clear to the ground--layers and layers of frothy purple cloth, appliqued with delicate, velvet-white flowers. It had sheer puffy sleeves and the elastic was itchy around my arms.

"It's beautiful, Mommy; thank you," was all I could say. I didn't think to ask what it was for.

I remembered the UPS man brought a flat, brown box one day, and inside was a pure white dress for Mommy. She tried it on for us. It was simple cotton with lace around the collar. It swished just below her knees, and she wore it with a lavender belt and white sandals. We all admired the dress, and thought it was wonderful--we'd *never* seen Mommy buy herself a new dress before.

Mom announced to my brother and sister and me that we were going on a trip to Lake Tahoe to visit Aunt Jeanie. We were going to take Nippy with us--that was fine--we like Nippy. (That's what we called him. I don't remember why--I just remember that he made us stop calling him that after our trip to Tahoe.) Everyone was happy as we loaded into Mom's big green Dodge Aspen station wagon, but Mom seemed happiest of all.

It was strange that she let Nippy drive--he *never* drove--not *her* car. He drove a little, buff-colored Honda that you could

hear from half a mile down the road, and when we heard it coming every evening we'd all run around turning off lights, squealing and bumping into each other like a bunch of excited prairie dogs, and at the last minute we'd dive into the coat closet all in a heap together--our hearts pounding and frequent shushings from Trudy--my older sister who always made the most noise anyway. It was close to impossible to keep three squirmy little kids quite for long, and Nippy would always say after the third knock,

"Okay, you guys, I know you're in there. Ready or not, here I come. . . ." And we'd burst out of the closet and yell, "Surprise!" even though it wasn't a surprise for him at all.

But Nippy was full of surprises. Little did we realize what kind of surprise what kind of surprise he and mom had for us that day. I remember how they laughed and talked in hushed voices as we drove along. I would have listened if I hadn't been so interested in the pretty landscape we were driving through. It was early spring, and not far down the road we passed a beautiful arbor over someone's driveway. Mom got all excited and had Nippy turn the station wagon around and go back. They both got out. Holding hands and giggling like children, they went under the arbor of lavender flowers and up to the front door. Trudy and I looked at each other wide-eyed and wondering. I pressed my face to the cool glass. The whole yard was full of great, voluminous bushes of blossoming lilac. It looked like it had snowed purple. Mother and nippy talked to the yard's owner for a long time. The owner had a big smile on hr face and she kept nodding her head.

Ashley, my younger brother was too little to see out the window, and he wiggled around beside me trying to climb our of his car seat to get a better look. We all stared in amazement as Mommy, Nippy, and the yard owner filled white, five-gallon buckets with lilacs. We knew Mommy liked flowers, but this was talking it a little far. Soon we found ourselves stuffed in around fragrant, grape-bunch shaped heads of lilac. The smell was heady.

It was a long drive--over five hours--and I don't remember most of it. I just remember Ashley fell asleep in his car seat, clutching Buddy--his stuffed bear, and when he wake up he asked, "Are we there yet?" Mother squeezed his hand instead

of answering, looked at Nippy who nodded, and asked us the most puzzling question.

“How would you children like Norman to be your Daddy?” It was silent for a long moment while we tried to internalize the meaning of her question. Trudy was the first to put two and two together and realize that the dresses, flowers, trip--they all meant Mommy was getting married. Her squeal started low and went high with delight, and she shouted, “Oh, YES! I’d love Norman to be our daddy!” She fairly bubbled right out of her seat like an overflowing washing machine, disrupting the gently swaying blossoms at her feet.

I looked at her--incredulous. I still didn’t get it, and Ashley looked as blank as I. Mommy explained to us that Norman (our Nippy) was going to become *her* husband and *our* dad--that meant they were getting married in Tahoe and Aunt Jeanie would be the witness.

Daddy? I thought. *Nippy be our daddy?* I knew I had a daddy somewhere, but I could barely remember him. He used to come visit us and bring us jars of pennies, but he lived far far away now, in a place called Maryland, which I thought was a kind of eternal Christmas. I guessed it would be all right to have a daddy, and I said it would, but I was mellow and thoughtful.

Ashley figured it must have been something to be happy about if it made Trudy so happy--she bounced and jigged and exclaimed over and over how wonderful, just wonderful, it was--so he smiled and nodded his head.

I remember the road was windy and I just looked out the window and held my funny feeling inside--like the feeling you have after you loose a tooth, put it under you pillow and in the morning the Tooth fairy’s taken it away and left a treat in its spot. *How did the Tooth fairy get in my room and under my pillow without waking me up, anyway? How would it be to have Norman as my dad? Would he be a treat left in the spot of my real daddy?*

After that I only remember little details, like Aunt Jeanie’s long nails, the A-frame chapel, feeling pretty in my purple dress, and the TV screen in the lobby of the chapel, where you could watch previous couples getting married. I remember holding a bouquet of drooping lilacs, and I remember Trudy and Ashley were both given a ring to put on their thumbs, hold in their fists,

and carry up the aisle to the chaplain between Mommy and Nippy. I remember when Mommy and Nippy kissed; I looked away--embarrassed, but Trudy giggled and stared. I remember the rosebud-covered cake and the "sizzly" punch. And I remember how destroyed I was when the lavender heart-shaped candle Aunt Jeanie and I had bought for Mommy melted and left ugly, hard deformities down one side making it look lopsided and lumpy. (Mom still has that candle.) But most of all I remember Ashley. Maybe because we have a photo of him hiding the corner of that great peaked, A-frame roof, under the sign that said "Lake Tahoe Wedding Chapel," dressed like a little man in his navy-blue suit, with buddy bear tucked under one arm. His full-pouty lips protruded and his eyes, those big hazel eyes, looked stricken--the face of a little boy losing his mother and taking it bravely. He didn't cry, he just looked stoically solemn, and refused to have his picture taken. Ashley didn't know his daddy--he only knew he had one--somewhere. He figured if Nippy was our new daddy and Mom was going with him, than he wouldn't see Mommy anymore either. Maybe they were all going to that eternal Christmas.

And when Mommy had gone, he did cry; soft, heart wrenching sobs and nobody knew why. He *never* cried. But then, a lot of "nevers" had been broken.

prose winner
- Amberly Howe

Leaping against Delhi Sunsets

There's something about the smell of a Delhi sunset. Sometimes, in winter, there is a whiff of coming frost that eeks over the land with the downing of the sun. In the spring, Delhi sunsets smell entirely different--blossomy. Whether pear, peach, almond, or apple blossoms, the dying day, closing in a sigh of sun, is dizzily fragrant. Summer sunsets are more complicated. They are rich with the aroma of ripening fruit--the smell of expectation. They smell like sun screen and algaed canal water. They also smell like tractor exhaust, wet puppies, and Daddy's sunburned sweat. But there's something else. Year round, Delhi sunsets carry the smell of something indescribable. Something slippery and unpinable.

I don't know why I am compelled to remember the sunsets of my childhood home. Now when I visit, I am awed by the silhouette of the eucalyptus trees against the emblazoned sky. I doubt that I was so enthralled with sunsets as a child, but now they grip me, amaze me. Something about the earth preparing for its nightly rest quiets me. The air cools and the waning light turns the orchards a golden green. Even our double-wide, manufactured home looks like a castle in this magical light. I once witnessed our neighbor's peach orchard, pink with blossom, just as the sun slipped behind the purple Western mountains. Then, the whole world seemed a smear of pink and gold, and in that moment I believed that I too was a beautiful and divine as the scene before me.

In Delhi, sunsets carry hope. "I think the pears are almost ripe." Daddy says. "Maybe tomorrow." One more sunset, one more down, and harvest can begin. Enough sunsets and my mom can freeze peaches and make applesauce. Enough sunsets and I can *be*.

My family takes walks at sunset, or so we did once upon a time. I walk behind Daddy, jumping into his shoed footprints with my bare feet. My toes make quick, round O's in his sandy shoe prints, and as I jump along behind him, waiting for him to take the next step, I marvel at how big Daddy's feet are. We walk like this while Lizzie, our energetic Queensland, tries to overcome her smallness. She leaps until she becomes a small, dark silhouette leaping against the evening sky. We are all

silhouettes as we walk down the canal road towards that unnamed spot where we decide to turn around and go back home again.

I have seen many sunsets--all distinct, all beautiful. Sometimes I imagine they are God's thumb print, His seal, on each day. I don't see many Delhi sunsets now, but there's something different in a Delhi sunset. It's in the slant of reddened sunlight over the flat, fertile land. It's how the sky blackens in the East and purples overhead and then falls into the West, a wild mess of color. It's in the smell. No matter the season, there's always the smell of eucalyptus as the trees sway in the cooling wind. And the crows, a parade of dipping M's always fly northwest to some mysterious haven. Grandpa's bamboo rustles and knocks in the breeze, but there is always that smell, unnameable, really--though I like to attribute it to tangible things. maybe it's simply the smell of growing.

I, like Lizzie, am leaping against Delhi sunsets, trying to overcome my smallness. And I'm not sure that I've seen enough Delhi sunsets.

- Rachelle Newbold

First Kiss

His lips were a whisper against my cheek--so light and sincere and endearing. Such an expression could not have been sweeter had it been given by any other. Though not at all the first kiss I had anticipated, it remains with me still as one of my richest memories of my fifteenth summer.

It was a summer of firsts for me although all nature stayed predictably the same. Goldfinches still undulated in little clouds of chirping yellow over fields of starhistle. Beggars' lice stickers still clumped on my shoe laces as I daily made my trek through the three-strand barbed wire fence, across a dry creek bed, and over the flat granite slab pocked with Indian grinding holes. Squirrels still hoarded pickery fremontia pods as if they were about to be rationed. And acorns still dried their hulls and fell like sporadic hail under the spreading Live Oak trees.

I worked at a neighbor's stables to support the monolithic appetite of Sundance, my first and only very own horse. It was hard work cleaning stalls. There were only twelve, but when they were ready to be "mucked," it meant five wheelbarrow trips of acrid refuse *out* and three wheelbarrow trips of dusty pine shavings *in*. That was 96 wheelbarrow loads of matter to load up, haul around, and appropriately deposit. It was my first summer of serious blisters and brawn. The easiest part of my job was caring for Holden, my employer's one-and-half year old son.

Holden adored me in a way only a baby could. He loved Sundance, too. When I was done in the stables I would go home to clean up and then ride Sundance the half mile or so back to the stables to watch Holden for the evening while his mother went out to the local karaoke meet and his father went on sheriff duty roaming the byways of our sleepy town. Holden was usually in the stables with his mom when I came riding in, and he usually came running, wearing only a diaper, shouting, "Hoesy, Hoesy." I would slide off-still in motion--and hurry to scoop him up before he got under Sundance's hooves. I would always hoist him onto Sundance's back to get him out of harms way while we rode out to the paddock where Sundance would graze.

When it was too dark to ride Sundance, play with the ponies in the pasture, or visit Eyore, the donkey, we would head for the little mobile home trailer and eat Chinese noodles and

cherry Popsicles while Holden stood on tiptoe flipping the light switch on and off, on and off. Holden had a fascination with light switches. There were more interesting than TV, Pooh Bear, or even his bottle. If I told him to stop he would say, "Uh, oh," stop for awhile, but be back before his Popsicle had time to melt. It was one such evening when I got a phone call with the news that Maya, one of the ponies, was sick.

Maya, (short for Mayonnaise) had eaten too many acorns, that, though predictably had fallen under the big Live Oak tree in his pasture, had unpredictable (at least for the first time in many years) produces a bumper crop. Maya wasn't anything astounding. He was small, on the older side, and his shaggy white coat turned all shades of coffee-shop brown in the summer months of tarweed and dust. He wasn't particularly bright either, which may explain why he ate enough bitter acorns to give himself a lethal dose of tannic acid. But whatever his shortcomings Holden and I loved him. The ranch owner, Mr. Wendell, knew that it was too late to save Maya short of pumping his stomach and administering costly drugs. He figured it would be better to put the poor creature out of his misery rather than spend excessive amounts of money on him or just let him suffer. Despite my enraging pleas for Maya's life Mr. Wendell ordered me to keep Holden inside--that he was calling the foreman of the ranch to dig a whole with the backhoe and drop Maya neatly into it with a bullet. I tried to look composed for Holden's dinner of Chinese noodles and even laughed at him as he dug his chubby hand into the mound and scrunched his nose while he repeated, "Eewie, eewie," over and over. But inside I was thinking that I was about to witness my first murder--Mr. Wendell was going to murder Maya.

The echo of the rifle shot still reverberated in my head as I sank into the old saggy sofa with the tattered 49ers throw crumpled between its cushions and cried. I put my hands over my head and dug my thumbs into the palpable flap of my ear canal to pinch out the sound. Holden gripped my pants leg and hauled himself up on the couch tummy first. I was use to him clambering all over me like a little marmot and ignored his baby grunts as he struggled to pull his fubsy legs onto the thread bare cushions. He grabbed a fist full of shirtfront and pulled himself into a kneeling position so he could look into my face. "Uh, oh,"

he said tracing a tear path with a dirty, pinky sized forefinger. "Holden," I started, irritated at last by his invasion. But he wrapped his little brown arms around my neck and soft as moth winds on the screen door brushed a wet kiss against my cheek.

"Ah bedder," he muttered and scooted down off the old sofa until his bare babyfeet hit the rug, and my heart hit the bottom of my worn Ropers. I didn't even mind when he scampered off to play with the light switch again. I didn't think it then, but he'd given me my first kiss.

- Amberly Howe

She likes to be alone

That's what they said about her. When she passed by to a table by herself. When they made small talk with her, and then walked on to their real friends, explaining why she wasn't invited.

She likes to be alone

She had told them that herself. Why? To help. To save the discomfort of being new and out of reach. They had looked so relieved. "Oh," they had signed out in relief, thanking her with their smile. Thanking her for letting them off the hook for her loneliness, freeing them of the guilt of her solidarity. "Oh," they sighed, understanding

She likes to be alone

It was more than that though. She hadn't really said it to ease a stranger's conscience. She had one it for . . . protection? Yes, a kind of protection; a wall. A wall that shielded out curious glances and prying eyes, hanging a sign up outside declaring that she had chosen this. Because if she hadn't chosen it, then why was . . . why?

Why would anyone choose this? To be in the center of noise and activity and have NONE of it directed at her. To be a birch among oaks. Skinny branches splayed, reaching out into empty space. While the old oaks grew above her, branches extended and twining into each other, making a seamless connection from tree to tree. An endless network of touches and tangles.

She likes to be alone

She looks expectantly into a familiar face. Sometimes they turn away, pretending they hadn't seen her. Sometimes they smile. hesitant or radiant, they are always the same. There is no invitation behind them. She straightens up and assumes a comfortable and confident air. She was doing exactly what she wanted, she told herself

She likes to be alone

- Rachel Arruda

Commonality

We sat side by side holding hands out on the patio, the warm sun in our laps, between pots of red geraniums. He gripped too tightly as if afraid I would let go--his flat thumb with the soft, loose flesh on its pad like an over ripe plum worked over the back of my hand. He squinted his bleary, cataract-grayed eyes at me trying to clear the blurry blob my image made on his retina. I pulled away uncomfortable with his close proximity and looked for a bridge--a social bridge, a time bridge, something to connect on. I tried to imagine his eyes clear and brown, his life young and new. I tried to imagine his 87 years away and put him 19 like me. I tried to put together the fragmented stories of his past and construct a commonality between us. I asked all the questions I could think to draw the gap together. But he tired of telling me his complicated business stories I queried him about. The words came too slowly and his memory globbed whole decades together. I quizzed him on the fine Cadillac in his garage--the make and year--and tried to look interested, but the conversation was as limited as his eyesight. So I recited poetry, Edwards and Shakespeare, Poe and Pope, Cowper and Bunyan. Out of poems, I asked if he wanted to learn one. He pressed his flat forefinger to his lips as if trying to decide and nodded his head. We began phrase by phrase.

"This hill though high,"

"This hill though high,"

"I covet"

"I covet"

"To ascend"

"To ascend," he paused to hear me repeat the line again. We never even got to the part that said, "The difficulty will not me offend" before his eyebrows bunched and I promised we'd take it up again tomorrow. A silence as sticky and heavy as scrambled eggs lay splattered between us.

"Just talk to me, Princess," he said and I sighed--at a loss.

"What about?"

"Oh, just about you."

I knew he had grown up on a ranch--he blamed his burn back on his younger years of breeding unwieldy colts. I began describing my summers at home in California. Not much the

same as a Louisiana businessman's memories I figured, but I'd give it a try.

"I used to count quail tracks in the dust on the way home from my job at a tree farm," I rambled. "I pulled shade cards out of drought-hardened clay all afternoon and stacked them in burlap bags." He nodded, smiling, encouraging me to go on, his hands squeezing mine in punctuation to my every sentence.

"Sometimes I saw rattlesnake tracks winding across the road. I could usually tell which were rattler tracks and which were gophersnake tracks because the rattlers pushed up higher mounds of sand between their "S" curves and drew a swervy line where the rattles dragged behind. I always hoped the quail got away. Sometimes quail get careless when they are taking dust baths in the sun, but usually they have a guard bird on duty. That's why they stay in bebies, I guess--to watch out for the rattlers." He seemed to be interested.

"I liked to go on after-dark bareback rides when the crickets were chirping and watch the stars pop out--Isn't it strange how they just suddenly appear winking and blinking? They always seem closer in summer, don't they?" He patted my hand and nodded--again. It was a vague bond. *Did* he remember? *Had* he noticed how the short nights blackened quickly after day had had its final say?

"I loved the sound of my horses hooves on the dirt road, but I was always worried we'd start a forest fire with his iron shoes," I smiled. "They made sparks whenever they struck together or when he stepped on a rock just right and it would go-pop . . ." His hands tightened, brows arched, eyes sparkled with recognition.

"Yes, I remember that! I'd forgotten. Oh but how those hooves would ring and spark when Lady ran. She was our best horse--could run like the wind. Papa trained her hisself. It was such a thrill to ride her. Don't remember whatever became of her . . . But I do remember how her hooves did spark!" His tongue was suddenly loosed as if I, a brain surgeon, had placed an electrode over a spot that contained hidden memory. He continued to recount tails of riding Lady and breaking her offspring. He told me about *his* summer working in his father's general store that bought, sold or traded everything from sugar and canned peas, to saddles and horses. Building on my snake

story he recalled how on a hunting trip he'd found a snake that had just swallowed a baby rabbit. He said he had chopped the snake in two and set the bunny free. He let go of my hand and stretched his arms to show me how long the snake had been. He waved his hands around in demonstration to the way his father "wupped" him for not shooting the rabbit for supper. I listened in rapt attention. Over all those differences, over all those years, a little persistence, a little creativity, and the help of one word unveiling a bridge of commonality.

- Amberly Howe

Along the Promenade. . . Without You (for E.O. Grundset)

I wish that they hadn't chosen to have your funeral on Monday. I had class and I couldn't make it. I'm sorry.

The weather was perfect, though. wet, rainy, cold--not unusual for a February day at Southern. There were masses of umbrellas meandering down the Promenade. Most of them were striped: white and dark color, usually green, blue, red, or black. Plain black also seemed to be a common umbrella color.

The old, twisted apple tree on the lower promenade had seven cardinals in it this morning. I wish you could have been here to see it. But no such luck.

I don't think I ever met you. I heard plenty of stories, though. Stories about your classes; stories about ornithology trips to the Everglades. I went to your Sabbath School a couple of times. I've even hung out in your room in the Student Center. And I've been to your lecture series four or five times, although I must admit it was because my biology grade depended on it. I've really enjoyed the Christmas Tree Lighting tradition you started. I've gone ever year. The free doughnut holes and hot chocolate are especially nice. Even though it looked more like a Christmas Blob than a Christmas Tree this year, it was still a great way to celebrate the beginning of the "most wonderful time of the year."

I guess what I really remember you from is your columns. They seemed so silly at the time. You would ramble about what

was going on up on the Promenade, ask some students a couple of questions, list some license plates of interest, survey the bulletin boards and throw in half a dozen odd facts or items of interest. I never took your columns that seriously, but I always read them.

I read them because I thought it was so awesome that some old guy cared enough to go to all that effort. Cared enough to be involved on campus, involved with the students, involved with our newspaper. I read them because you made the little things seem important. You made me realize that the true essence of life isn't the big huge splendiferous things that happen every once in a while, but the little things, everyday things, the who's-eating-what-at-KR's-place things.

I'm going to miss having you around to remind me of that every month. I get off focus sometimes. I start forgetting to live my life, to enjoy the moments. Instead I worry about next week's test, about what they're having for lunch at the caf, about why my shoes keep coming untied.

It's been almost a week now. The flag's back up at the top of the flagpole and life's back to normal for most of us. But I wanted to thank you for caring, for teaching me to care, for taking the time to be real.

You've shown me that you don't have to be ultra-famous for your life to matter. Your death didn't show up on CNN or the front page of the New York Times. You won't be buried in Arlington or memorialized by some monolithic chunk of granite in Central Park, but your life counted. You touched lives, made a difference.

Because it's the little things that count. The smiles, the bird-watching trips, the columns. Thanks for all the reminders to pay attention to life. I won't forget, and I won't forget you.

- Jennifer Pester

Sitio Alon: A Picture of Poverty

Sweat dripped down my face as I forced my legs to continue hiking up the mountain. My arms and back ached from hauling my sleeping bag and my oversized backpack, stuffed with everything I needed for the next three months. Twenty-four hours by plane, three days on a huge ship, two hours by jeep, two hours on a motorcycle, three hours hike uphill and over the mountain, and finally I was here. Surrounded by slopes of green vegetation lay a small village along an open clearing. Sitio Alon, Mindanao Island, Philippines--this was the primitive and remote mission field I had always envisioned, but the reality of such a place took me by surprise. Everything around me was a picture of poverty.

As I approached the cluster of tiny huts, natives stared curiously, but shyly, at the sight of a foreigner. Dirty and torn rags, remotely resembling the color and style they had once been, hanging loosely on their dark brown skin. Some of the tears were so large it seemed pointless to have anything on. A number of naked children ran barefoot along the dusty ground. Young, teenage girls carried babies tied around them with dirty, worn cloth. The chief datu and his four wives, dressed in a patchwork of faded colors, emerged from one of the larger huts, about the size of the dorm rooms at Southern. They were decked with bracelets and necklaces made of colorful, plastic beads. Their teeth were dark and stained.

The chief datu directed me toward one of the larger huts. Wood and bamboo awkwardly assembled together on stilts a couple feet off the ground was my new home. Most of the other huts were considerably smaller--about the size of our bathroom at home. Families of five, six, even ten people lived in these tiny huts. I sometimes wondered how they all slept. The numerous cracks in the bamboo walls provided little protection at night from the frigid mountain wind. I snuggled tightly in my sleeping bag, but the natives only had thin sheets and blankets. Early one morning, I was a little boy squatting on his porch, shivering in the cold. The thatched roofs, resembling the neepa huts pictured in romantic beach resorts, did their job except when rain began to pour. Drip, drip, drip--I had to hold an umbrella inside our hut to keep from getting wet. The floor, or rather the slabs of rough,

wooden plank with good-sized cracks in between, creaked and groaned with each step I took. Some of the holes were big enough for my feet to fall through. At least I never needed a broom to sweep. Whatever food we spilled, we brushed it through the holes. The chickens and pigs took care of it below.

The natives ate sweet potatoes for almost every meal. The dry plain tubers differed greatly from the juicy, sweet variety found in the States. Little children walked around clutching sweet potatoes in their small dirty hands, their little brown tummies bulging from malnutrition or parasitic worms. Not much would grow in the rocky soil and heat--some corn, a green vegetable called sayote, and maybe squash. No fancy dishes, just mere survival.

Everything at Sitio Alon was about mere survival. There were no bathrooms other than the hold we dug. There were no showers other than the small waterfall with freezing cold water. There were no schools other than the one we eventually started. There were no stores other than the one two hours away. No telephones, no radios, no washing machines, no refrigerators, no electricity, no nothing. Sitio Alon was a place untouched by modern civilization.

Not only that, this village was untouched by Christianity as well. The spiritual poverty of the natives far exceeded everything else. They were poor because they didn't know Jesus as their Friend and Savior. They were poor because they didn't have the love of God in their lives. They were poor because they didn't have the hope of eternal life.

Poverty--that's the best way to sum of Sitio Alon: a cluster of tiny huts, a few pigs and chickens wandering about the dirt ground, and natives clothed in rags with little to eat. Sitio Alon was a picture of poverty, barely meeting the needs of survival: food, clothing, and shelter. In this primitive village, we shared Jesus with the natives, and many accepted God's give to salvation. Tears rolled down their faces as they heard about the beauty of heaven and the New Jerusalem. Such a wonderful place prepared for them. Mansions to live in. Bountiful food. Streets of gold. What a contrast from Sitio Alon! A place with no tears, no death, no pain . . . no more poverty.

- Helen Lee

The Day Jesus Came to Visit My Church

I was unusually early for church that morning. I had come to practice the songs that I was going to play for that day's service. I hurriedly entered the building stomping the winter snow from my boots. He startled me. As I walked into the sanctuary of the church, his matted red hair caught my attention. That wasn't the only thing that struck me about him. His long black trench coat hardly covered his torn jeans and sweater. His yellow jagged teeth protruded from his chapped lips; yet his smile warmed my heart. I had never seen him there before, but there he sat in the very back row along side of the Community Service Leader. I never learned his name, but for now I'll call him Mike.

I continued to walk down the aisle toward the organ. I sat down and began to play. I wasn't through five notes before I heard an explosion of applause. I quickly stopped and looked to the rear of the sanctuary and there was Mike clapping wildly.

"Who is this guy? Why is he clapping at me?" I thought, my face now red from embarrassment. Mike continued to clap throughout most of that selection and the next. Soon people began to file into the pews. Faint whispers buzzed around the room and all eyes were drawn to Mike.

"Who's that?"

"I don't know, look at what he's wearing."

"Someone must have picked him up off the street. He is a mess and is that what that stale smell is?"

They were right. Someone had picked up Mike from his cardboard box that morning on their way to church. You could see he was as proud as a peacock to be there. He listened intently throughout the program and tried to participate in the discussion when he was allowed.

"Gad is to us sooo good here," he said. His speech was muffled and hard to make out. His disfigured mouth made it hard for him to say what he wanted to say. Most of the time he just mumbled nonsense words that didn't make sense, and since no one could understand him, he was ignored.

Soon the elder got up to give the announcements for the week. And when he was through, Mike spoke up.

“Can you read 1 Peter 4:7 for announcement?”

“Excuse me?” the elder responded. “I couldn’t hear what you said.”

“Can you read 1 Peter 4:7 for announcement?”

“I am sorry I still didn’t quite catch what you said.”

“I think he said ‘Can you read 1 Peter 4:7 for announcement?’” I put in, startled that I understood.

The elder quickly agreed and flipped quickly through his Bible and found the text; “The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled to that you can pray.” The elder smiled and thanked Mike for this reminder and quietly walked off the stage.

I sat staring at Mike’s smiling and now content face. He never looked back at me. I soon realized I needed to begin playing the organ again and turned to do so. The church service proceeded on as usual except for the occasional outburst of applause from Mike. I couldn’t keep from giggling in my seat at the awkwardness he caused. As the pastor spoke, my mind wandered to the verse Mike had requested.

“How did he know about that verse?” I thought. “I didn’t see any Bible in his hand. He is a homeless mad, right off the street, what does he know about God?” It continued to trouble me. “Yet, how appropriate the verse was for our church today.” I tried to set it aside, but I couldn’t. There was something different about Mike, I just couldn’t put my finger on it.

The service ended with a closing hymn and more applause from Mike. People soon began to file out to the foyer. When I had finished shutting down the organ, I gathered up my things and headed out of the sanctuary and in to the foyer to join the socializing. As I was putting my coat on, I happened to glance over at Mike. There he was walking around trying to be part of the conversations that were closed to him.

“What doing you today? Church good!” His frail ragged appearance was disgraceful and the smell that encircled him was enough to send your stomach on a wild ride.

My heart longed to befriend him, but I didn’t know what to say. He never came over to me, but I never went over to him either. I wanted to, and even once when he walked by I tried to shout

a “Hello,” but he didn’t hear me. I saw the elders and deacons of the church heading out to the Community Service Building to find something to send Mike home with. But they were unsuccessful.

Someone eventually volunteered to invite Mike home for dinner. I followed him out to the parking lot where he planned to wait for his host. I stood against the front door watching in anticipation at what this startling man would do next. A small, shy boy stood alone on the church steps. Mike’s personality wouldn’t allow him to resist talking to the child.

“Hey, baby,” Mike smiled. “Can I have a hug, baby?”

I waited for the young boy to run screaming to his mother, but he didn’t. To my amazement he smiled back as their eyes met, and he leaped into Mike’s arms. I couldn’t believe it! This shy child clung to Mike despite his appearance and the fact that he was a total stranger.

“Ah, I luv you, baby.” Mike said as he squeezed the boy in his arms. He soon set him back down on the steps. “Wait right here.” Mike dashed in and out of the church in a second and was soon standing in front of the little boy with an old church bulletin.

“Do you like airplanes?” Mike asked. The boy excitedly nodded his head.

I watched Mike form a paper airplane and send it soaring through the air, he and the child laughing playfully. They must have thrown it and chased it at least twenty times. As I watched him play with the airplane and do other exciting tricks for the little boy, I couldn’t help remember the story of Jesus and the children. They ran to him and nestled themselves on His lap, yet everyone else cast Him out. They weren’t afraid of Him and he loved them so. They brought him great joy. I saw that joy in Mike’s eyes as he played with the boy.

“Do you think?” I thought. “Could this be Him?” The thought tugged at my heart. “No, probably not, why would He come here?” It was now time for Mike to go, and he ceased playing his games. He turned to tell the young boy good-bye.

“Bye-bye, baby.” Mike’s hand waved wildly as he continued. “Bye-bye, baby.” He began to walk backwards still waving and repeating his farewell. He turned to walk towards the car walking right past me. I couldn’t calm my imagination as I

wondered if just maybe . . . just maybe that could be who I thought it was. Suddenly, without warning, Mike whipped around and looked me dead in the eye. I didn't know whether to smile or run, so I just stood there.

His face broke into a smile, one that I will never forget. He looked at me and said: "Good-bye, beautiful." His hand waved violently at my stiff form.

It was the first time he had acknowledged my existence since his applause at my music earlier that morning. He turned and walked to the car and host awaiting his arrival. He got in without another word. I knew then that I was right. Jesus had come to my church that day.

They drove away as the young child and I stood on the church steps, our lives changed forever. Then the little boy turned and ran inside to find his family. I stood there and watched the small car until I could no longer make it out.

"I wonder if I will ever see Mike again?" I thought. But then

I realized that I would see Mike again very soon. And when I do, He'll be sitting on a throne of glory, dressed in royal robes. And when He takes my hand to lead me into His kingdom, I know that He'll look deep into my eyes and say: "Welcome beautiful."

- Stacy Tomlinson

Credits

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It is always pleasing . . . to realize there is more to a person than first assumed. In a way, that is what poetry and prose are all about. I believe I have learned more about this body of contributors by studying their works than I have in my daily conversations with them; Poetry and Prose delve deeper than the immediately obvious--allowing a glimpse into the very soul of its author. Which is why I wish to thank all who have contributed. You have shared more than just your words . . .

I owe a special thanks to Ariel Childers. Her tireless scrutiny has made the Legacy as error-free as possible. I also wish to thank Mrs. Helen Godfrey Pyke, for her undying dedication to the students and their respective works. She has supported this project in numerous ways (including financially).

I have enjoyed assembling this year's Legacy. May it be a source of inspiration and insight into the lives to those around you.

- Jesse Rademacher, 1999

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